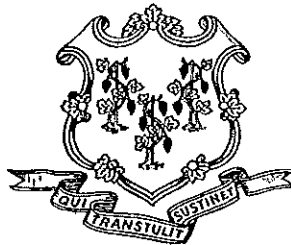


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State of Connecticut
SENATE

Chair
Select Committee on Children
Public Health Committee
Member
Judiciary Committee
Regulations Review Committee

TESTIMONY
February 14, 2013

Good Morning, Senator LeBeau and Representative Perone and members of the Commerce Committee. Many thanks to the committee for hearing proposed bill 530, An Act Concerning Funding For the Consortium of Connecticut Art Museums.

This bill would establish a place in our state budget that would support many of the art museums in our state. Already in our budget is support for the performing arts, the Beardsley Zoo, libraries, and our tourism districts. These are part of what attracts people to our state and also are a matter of civic pride enjoyed by everyone in our communities. We identify with these places of historical treasures that afford a sense of cultural place in our minds.

Whether it is performing arts or fine arts, people are attracted to food for the soul and the senses. My hometown, New Britain, commonly refers to the New Britain Museum of American Art as our gem. We are not only proud of it, we flock to it for special exhibits, classes for school students, and other events held on an on-going, daily basis. Most importantly is the collection the museum holds and exhibits. Note the two words "American Art" in its title.

Our gem contains some of the most brilliant artists our country claims as its own. Mary Cassat, Winslow Homer, and John Singer Sargent have a home in New Britain. The Hudson River School, American Impressionists and the Ash Can School are fully represented. Exquisite works by Childe Hassam, Albert Bierstadt, and Frederic Church have a place here. Even Gilbert Stuart, portraitist of our first President, George Washington, has a work of art in our museum. World famous is the Thomas Hart Benton murals, an integral part of NBMAA. In fact, the museum, established in 1903, is the first ever in our country dedicated to American art. In my other life, outside the legislature, I am a collector of American art pottery. While learning and appreciating American ceramics, I came to learn many other aspects of American Art. I also worked at art shows and art venues on the East Coast. I observed that American Art is highly desirable and eagerly sought by collectors all over the world. Our museums offer a unique look at a history of our culture and people: What interested us, a look at past mores and beliefs as well as the way we looked and acted, who we were. Art museums are a vital link to all we are made of. They are a comfort and solace when times are troubling and a place where the heart sings when brilliance and beauty meet in a work of art. Therefore, it is appropriate that our state establish a partnership with them that will offer operating stability.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to present this testimony.